

1608/48 74  
GOD'S awful Summons to a sinful  
Nation considered ;

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IN A  
S E R M O N

P R E A C H ' D

*In Little-Wild-Street,*

The 27th of November, 1737.

In Commemoration of the

[Dreadful S T O R M of Wind,

W H I C H

Happened upon that Day in the Year 1703.

---

*Published at the Request of the Hearers.*

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By JOSEPH STENNETT.

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THE SECOND EDITION.

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L O N D O N,

Printed for AARON WARD, at the *King's-Arms*, in  
*Little-Britain*; and H. WHITRIDGE, at the *Royal*  
*Exchange*. MDCCXXXVIII.

(Price Sixpence.)

1608/4874

STERNON

THE

In

The 27th of November, 1837.

In Commemoration of the

Disastrous Storm of Wind

which

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TO THE  
**Church of CHRIST,**  
MEETING  
*In Little Wild-street.*

*My dear Friends,*



THE affectionate regard,  
which you have in so many  
kind instances manifested  
to me, since providence  
has cast my lot among you, may,

very probably, have prevail'd on you to entertain too favourable an opinion of this plain discourse. Yet I am not without hope, that a prospect of some real service to the interest of religion, in this sad time of corruption and apostacy, was the governing motive that engag'd you to press for its publication. And therefore, tho' this address is by no means intended to make you answerable for its defects; yet there could remain no doubt with me, to whom it should be inscribed.

IF, with all its imperfections, it may be happily instrumental to answer the good design of the worthy gentleman \*, who established this annual memorial of so awakening a providence; and may prove a means

\* Mr. John Taylor.

## DEDICATION. v

to promote any degree of reformation among us, both you and I shall rejoice. Let us therefore be careful to put in practice ourselves, what we so earnestly recommend to others. I am sure, you will not think it unseasonable for me to put you in mind, that the tranquillity you at present enjoy, after the many distressing providences you have pass'd through, calls for some suitable returns. And it would be sad indeed, if instead of gratefully improving such a favourable situation, you should sink into an indolent and carnal frame; and, by this means, lose the blessings which you have so often, and so earnestly sought at the hand of the Lord. I bless God, I have good ground to hope better things of you, my dear brethren; tho' I speak with a jealousy, which, I hope, does  
not



vi DEDICATION.

not altogether unbecome that station, which obliges me to watch for your souls, as one who must give an account.

GOD is my witness, how ardently I desire, that you may be edified, and prosper in the power and purity of religion; that you may fill up your several stations, both in the church of God, and in the world, with great usefulness; and that being led safely through all the dangers of life by the conduct of the Divine Spirit, and supported, in all its vicissitudes, by his consolations, you may at last inherit those calm and peaceful regions, which are purchased for you by the blood of the Lamb; and in which the principles of grace, and the practice of holiness will certainly terminate.

IF,

DEDICATION. vii

IF, to these happy purposes, any of my poor services may contribute, it will be the gracious answer of the warmest wishes, and constant prayers of,

*Your most affectionate Friend,*

*and Servant,*

*in the Gospel of Christ,*

Joseph Stennett.

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and Servant,

in the Gospel of Christ.

Joseph Stennett.





AMOS iv. 12.

-----Prepare to meet thy God,  
O Israel.



HE messenger of God who delivered this awful summons to the house of *Israel*, a little before their captivity, was of the tribe of *Judah*, and call'd out to this work in a very extraordinary way: for he was, as he says himself, originally *no prophet, neither the son of a prophet, but a herdsman of Tekoah, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit*<sup>a</sup>. A person of very mean rank and condition to be employ'd on so great an occasion. But, perhaps, it was the pleasure of God, at a time when the pride of human reason was at a great height, thus, in a very remarkable manner, by *foolish things to confound the wise; and by the things that were weak, base, and contemptible, to confound those that were mighty, that no flesh should glory in his presence*<sup>b</sup>. It was a choice that carried in it in-

<sup>a</sup> Amos vii. 14.

<sup>b</sup> 1 Cor. i. 27, 28, 29.

2 *A SERMON in commemoration*

deed a very proper rebuke to a nation which had so ill used the prophets who had been sent to them before; many of whom had, on a temporal account, been of higher circumstances, and a more polite education. Thus a plain herdman is appointed to deal roughly with a rebellious people, and to use them as the *kine of Bashan*<sup>c</sup>, who had so ungratefully slighted a more tender manner of address. As he was first sent with a terrible commission of divine wrath to the *Gentile* nations which bordered on *Judah* and *Israel*, and were for a long time their cruel oppressors; so one would have thought, that the messages he had to deliver to his own countrymen should have been attended to with some good degree of seriousness and candour: but the contrary is too evident, and from his own account of the matter, it appears that he met with no better usage than his predecessors. Though his figures are generally borrowed from a plain country life, and his own rustic employments; yet they are so strong, his images so lively, so well adapted to the design in view, and illustrated in such a manner, as, together with the faithfulness and courage of the prophet, even within the walls of a prince's palace<sup>d</sup>, did not a little confirm the truth of his mission from heaven, and the assistance he had from thence.

HAVING in the context, in a most awakening manner, represented to the tribes of *Israel*

<sup>c</sup> Amos iv. 1.

<sup>d</sup> Ch. vii. 13.

their crimes, and the judgments with which they had been visited for their iniquities, and which had not been productive of that repentance and reformation as might have been reasonably expected; he proceeds, in the words before us, in the most solemn manner, to require this sinful nation to prepare for a dreadful interview with that God whom they had so often and so greatly affronted, and who was shortly coming forth in a way more terrible than any in which he had yet appeared.-----  
*Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.*---- A short word, but full of every thing that is important and tremendous! I shall therefore,

I. ENQUIRE to whom this awful admonition was sent.

II. GIVE you some account of the circumstances of this people at the time when they received it.

III. OPEN the admonition itself. And,

IV. IN the last place, I shall attempt to make some improvement of these things, by applying them to our own circumstances, and the anniversary occasion of this day.

I. I AM to enquire to whom this awful admonition was sent.

AND the text informs us it was to *Israel*, a name that was given by God himself to the patriarch *Jacob* on a very extraordinary occasion,



#### 4 A SERMON in commemoration

caſion<sup>e</sup>, when he had wreſtled with him, and as a prince had prevailed; and ſo his deſcendants were all called the children of *Iſrael*: they inherited their father's name, and, as the apoſtle expreſſes it, were *Iſrael after the fleſh*<sup>f</sup>. And thus,

1. THIS name very often in ſcripture includes the whole twelve tribes of the *Jewiſh* nation<sup>g</sup>. But,

2. IT is alſo frequently limited to the ten tribes which revolted from the houſe of *David* in the time of *Rehoboam*, and erected a kingdom at *Samaria*<sup>h</sup>, which continued till, for their ſins, they were deliver'd up into the hands of *Shalmaneſer*, and carried captive into *Aſſyria*<sup>i</sup>. Thus it was uſed to denominate theſe tribes, in contradiftinction to thoſe of *Judah* and *Benjamin*, which remained under the government of the poſterity of *David*, and were called by the name of *Judah*. Again,

3. As the only viſible church of God was to be found among the poſterity of *Jacob*, who were the people which God had in a very peculiar and extraordinary manner ſet apart for himſelf<sup>k</sup>, as they had the divine oracles<sup>l</sup>, the covenant, and the promiſes; ſo the name of *Iſrael* is often uſed in ſcripture to ſignify the viſible church of God, or that body of people which profeſſed the true religion.

<sup>e</sup> Gen. xxxii. 28.

<sup>f</sup> 1 Cor. x. 18.

<sup>g</sup> Exod. xix. 3..

<sup>h</sup> 1 Kings xii.

<sup>i</sup> 2 Kings xviii.

<sup>k</sup> Amos iii. 2.

<sup>l</sup> Rom. iii. 2.

4. IT is also sometimes confin'd to the saints, the chosen of God, who are partakers of a real, inward, and spiritual relation to him, and are the true *Israel of God*<sup>m</sup>: those who are redeem'd by the blood of Jesus, deliver'd from a worse than *Egyptian* bondage; the little handful of true believers who, in the midst of a profane world, and a multitude of carnal professors, live by faith, and, as *Israelites indeed*<sup>n</sup>, shew their faith by their sincere, their constant, and universal obedience; *whose bread is given them, and whose waters are sure*<sup>o</sup>; who are lead safely through the wilderness of this world, and at last enter into that *rest which remains for the people of God*<sup>p</sup>. These are those concerning whom the apostle *Paul* speaks by way of distinction, when he says, *they are not all Israel, which are of Israel*<sup>q</sup>.

IT evidently appears from the context, that in this place the ten tribes as a nation is intended; for the distinction is kept up between *Judah* and *Israel* in the title of this prophecy, viz. *the words of Amos which he saw concerning Israel, in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam king of Israel*<sup>r</sup>. And in the beginning of the chapter of which the text is a part, the prophet addresses himself to them under the character of *the kine of Bashan, that were in the mountain of Samaria, who came to Bethel*,

<sup>m</sup> Gal. vi. 16,

<sup>n</sup> John i. 47.

<sup>o</sup> Isa. xxxiii. 16,

<sup>p</sup> Heb. iv. 9.

<sup>q</sup> Rom. ix. 6.

<sup>r</sup> Amos i. 1.

and

## 6 *A SERMON in commemoration*

*and transgress'd, and multiplied their transgressions at Gilgal* <sup>†</sup>. But the considering this as a national character, doth not at all hinder the view the prophet might have by this name to remind them of their profession of the true religion, especially as that profession was national, however it had been polluted by the corruptions introduc'd by *Jeroboam the son of Nebat*, who is so often charg'd in scripture with having *made Israel to sin*. Nor must we neglect the regard which, I think, he may be suppos'd to have had by this title to those *Israelites indeed*, which yet remain'd among this very corrupt people. For no doubt some few among them, notwithstanding the common defection, truly believed in God, and sincerely adhered to him. And this leads me,

II. To give you some account of the circumstances of this people at the time when this awakening message was sent to them. And,

I. **THEY** were greatly indebted to heaven for favours of every kind, and at this time they were in the enjoyment of more than ordinary outward prosperity. God had at first chosen them as the objects of his peculiar care; they were of that family he had known, and which, by a variety of glorious privileges, he had distinguish'd from *all the families of the earth* <sup>‡</sup>. Besides the many salvations of which they had

<sup>†</sup> Amos iv. 1, 4.

<sup>‡</sup> Chap. iii. 2.



been partakers in common with *Judah*, before their separation from that tribe, they had been deliver'd from the slavery threaten'd by *Rheboam*; they had likewise been made by the divine providence happily successful in their wars with the *Syrians*<sup>u</sup>, the *Moabites*<sup>v</sup>, and other *Gentile* nations round about them<sup>x</sup>. *Jehoash*, the father of their present king, had been the instrument in the hand of God, to deliver them from the ambitious designs of *Amaziab* king of *Judah*; who, flush'd with his successes against the *Edomites*, sent an insolent challenge to the king of *Israel*: a battle accordingly ensued, and *Israel* obtained a complete victory, in which they took the king of *Judah* prisoner, march'd up to *Jerusalem*, made a breach in the walls, at which they entered and plundered the city, and then return'd home laden with the richest spoils<sup>y</sup>. And at the beginning of the present reign, when they were in great distress, God saw their affliction, and deliver'd them by the hand of *Jeroboam*, who recover'd a considerable part of the country which the neighbouring nations had taken from *Judah*, and added it to the portion of *Israel*<sup>z</sup>. Having thus check'd the pride of *Judah*, humbled the heathen nations round about them, enlarg'd their own borders, and settled a firm peace with all their neighbours, *Israel* enjoy'd

<sup>u</sup> 1 Kings xx.

<sup>v</sup> 2 Kings vii.

<sup>w</sup> Ch. iii.

<sup>x</sup> Ch. xiii.

<sup>y</sup> Ch. xiv.

<sup>z</sup> Ver. 25, 26, 27.

through

# 8 A SERMON in commemoration

through the remainder of this reign, which was a very long one, a profound tranquillity. They *sat down under their vines and their fig-trees, and there was none to make them afraid*<sup>a</sup>. And in the full enjoyment of all this prosperity, what might have been reasonably expected from them? Surely that, as they had obtain'd these happy circumstances by the kind interposition of providence in their favour, they should have discovered some grateful sense of the divine goodness, and return'd to that God, who had so often, and so remarkably shewn himself to be the God of *Israel*, and was now loading them with loving-kindness. But, alas! the case was far otherwise. For,

2. THERE was scarce ever found among them, or any other nation, a greater degree of depravity and wickedness than at this time. They were so exceedingly corrupted in their principles, that *Isaiah* says, *they call'd evil good, and good evil; they put darkness for light, and light for darkness*<sup>b</sup>. Such was the pride of their carnal reason that they were *wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight*<sup>c</sup>. Many of them perhaps then thought that the religion of nature was sufficient, and so they threw contempt on divine revelation; and, as the same prophet expresses it, they *cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel*<sup>d</sup>. And so in the midst of all their boast of wisdom, God

<sup>a</sup> Micah iv. 4.

<sup>b</sup> Isa. v. 20.

<sup>c</sup> Ver. 21.

<sup>d</sup> Ver. 24.

gave them up to blindness of mind, and hardness of heart. They were grown weary of any serious regard to religious seasons, and were us'd to say, *when will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn; and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat* <sup>e</sup>? Besides that mixture of idolatry and superstition, which was introduced into the worship of God by *Jeroboam* the son of *Nebat*, for reasons of state, and for the same reasons, through so many succeeding reigns, most sinfully continued; the prophets charge them with many strange acts of profaneness that attended their worship. *They laid themselves down upon cloaths laid to pledge, by every altar; and they drank the wine of the condemn'd in the house of their God* <sup>f</sup>. As impiety towards God rose to this scandalous height amongst them, so they perpetrated all sorts of unrighteousness and violence towards one another. *They made the ephah small, and the shekel great, falsifying the balances by deceit* <sup>g</sup>. The Lord looked for judgment, says one of the prophets of that time, *but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry* <sup>h</sup>. *The wicked are justified for reward, and the righteousness of the righteous is taken away from him* <sup>i</sup>. 'Tis also a sad representation which the prophets have left upon record of their pride and luxury, and the general dissoluteness of

<sup>e</sup> Amos viii. 5.

<sup>f</sup> Chap. ii. 8.

<sup>g</sup> Chap. viii. 5.

<sup>h</sup> Isaiah v. 7.

<sup>i</sup> Ver. 23.



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<sup>g</sup> Chap. viii. 5.

<sup>h</sup> Isaiah v. 7.

<sup>i</sup> Ver. 23.

10 *A SERMON in commemoration*

their manners. They not only *added drunkenness to their thirst, but they rose up early in the morning to follow strong drink; they continued till night, till wine inflamed them<sup>k</sup>*. Instead of mourning for their sins, and humbling their souls before God, they devoted themselves to wantonness and pleasure. *They had the harp, and the viol, and the tabret and pipe, and wine in their feasts; but they regarded not the work of the Lord, neither consider'd the operation of his hands<sup>l</sup>*. All sorts of uncleanness were practis'd among them, even such as were of the most horrid and brutal kind. *By swearing and lying, and killing and stealing, and committing adultery, they broke out, and blood touched blood<sup>m</sup>*. Their iniquities were not only very great, but were found every where, and among men of all ranks. Their princes and great men were defil'd with all sorts of wickedness; *they tempted their king to iniquity, and to stretch forth his hand with scorners<sup>n</sup>*. Many of those to whom the administration of justice was committed, *turn'd it into wormwood<sup>o</sup>*. *They stor'd up violence and robbery in their palaces<sup>p</sup>; they afflicted the just, and took a bribe, and turn'd aside the poor in the gate from their right<sup>q</sup>*. The priests also were exceedingly corrupt, both in their principles, and their morals. They were

<sup>k</sup> Isaiah v. 11.

<sup>l</sup> Ver. 12.

<sup>m</sup> Hof. iv. 2.

<sup>n</sup> Chap. vii. 5.

<sup>o</sup> Amos v. 7.

<sup>p</sup> Chap. iii. 10.

<sup>q</sup> Chap. v. 12.

unwilling,



unwilling, as well as uncapable, to teach the people themselves, and they oppos'd and persecuted them who did; as is evident in the case of our prophet *Amos*<sup>r</sup>. Thus they were, *like people, like priest*<sup>t</sup>. Through the ignorance and wickedness of their teachers, *the people perish'd for lack of knowledge*<sup>t</sup>, and *the people lov'd to have it so*<sup>v</sup>. They were pleas'd with those that *daubed with untempered mortar, and sewed pillows under their arms*<sup>w</sup>; but tho' their iniquities abounded, they hated rebuke. *They gave the Nazarites wine to drink, and commanded the prophets, saying, prophesy not*<sup>x</sup>.

3. In these sinful and deplorable circumstances, God did not fail to give *Israel* frequent, and suitable notices of his displeasure. He sent his servants to admonish them, *rising up early and sending them*<sup>y</sup>. The prophet *Isaiab* had his commission at this time, and was furnish'd with a most plentiful effusion of the Spirit. *Hosea* was directed to set their sins in order before them, and to represent the danger to which they were expos'd, in the strongest light. The prophet, from whose warnings I have taken the words of the text, dealt with the people, of all conditions among them, with the greatest faithfulness. He set before them the sad effects of their sins in former times: He shew'd them from what source

<sup>r</sup> Amos vii.

<sup>t</sup> Hof. iv. 9.

<sup>u</sup> Ver. 6.

<sup>v</sup> Jer. v. 31.

<sup>w</sup> Ezek. xxii. 28.

<sup>x</sup> Amos ii. 12.

<sup>y</sup> Jer. vii. 25.

12 *A SERMON in commemoration*

all their afflictions sprang, and from whence, they always had their salvations: He most affectionately exhorted them to repentance and reformation; and supported his advice with motives drawn from the goodness and mercy of God, from their many past experiences of his compassion, and from the most encouraging promises of his continued favour, in case of their compliance. In a word, he threatened them with a variety of dreadful judgments, if they persisted in their obstinacy; and at last, in express words, acquainted them with the approach of that utter desolation, which was soon after the deplorable consequence of their impenitency\*. No dangers, to which he was expos'd, could prevent him from entering the very palace of the king, and declaring his message in the ears of the court. And when *Amaziak*, the priest of the household, instead of encouraging the faithfulness of the prophet, tried all the influence of flatteries and threats to prevent him from the discharge of his duty; he bravely stood his ground, and fear'd not to let him know, that, as he had so basely prostituted his office, a peculiar portion of the divine vengeance would be poured out upon him and his family, as the reward of his wickedness, in the approaching day of the general calamity\*. But notwithstanding all these faithful warnings, *Israel* still went on in sin. Sometimes they were brought into streights and difficulties, and

\* Amos v. 27.

\* Chap. vii.

they

they no sooner cried unto the Lord, but they were deliver'd. But then, alas! as the prophet *Hosea* observes, *Israel forgot their maker and their redeemer, and built them temples, and Judah multiplied fenced cities*<sup>b</sup>. The latter ascribing their success to their own policy and valour, while the former attributed it to the assistance of their false gods. Indeed the ingratitude of this nation was such, as can hardly be parallel'd by any other; it were greatly to be wish'd that there were not something too much like it in our own. The prophet *Isaiah* represents it in a very lively manner, under the parable of a vineyard, in the fifth chapter of his prophecy; where, I think, the sad resemblance may be too plainly discovered. God sometimes tried them with the gentler tokens of his displeasure, and at other times he contended with them by those that were more severe. He visited them with blasting, and with mildew, with famine, with pestilence, and with the sword, and some of them *he overthrew as Sodom and Gomorrah*<sup>c</sup>. The special judgment inflicted on the king of *Judah* for his profaneness, and the dreadful earthquake which shook the whole land, and soon followed the contempt cast on this prophet<sup>d</sup>, one would have thought, shou'd have awaken'd them from their security. But alas! when *they return'd*, it was not to the Most High<sup>e</sup>, nor did they seek him for all this. They *fed on the wind, and followed after the east-*

<sup>b</sup> Hof. viii. 14.

<sup>c</sup> Amos iv.

<sup>d</sup> Amos i. 1.

<sup>e</sup> Hof. vii. 16.

wind;



#### 14 *A SERMON in commemoration*

*wind; they made a covenant with the Assyrians, and oil was carried into Egypt<sup>f</sup>. They sin'd still more and more, and grew so impudent in sinning, that it might truly be said of them, as it was of Judah and Jerusalem, their tongue and their doings were against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of his glory; the shew of their countenance witness'd against them, and they declared their sin as Sodom, and hid it not<sup>g</sup>. Those who paid any regard to religion, for the most part, rested in the mere outward and ceremonial form, to the great neglect of morality. A behaviour of which the Lord had often declar'd his abhorrence. *I hate, says he, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Tho' ye offer me burnt-offerings, and your meat-offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace-offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the voice of thy songs; for I will not bear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream<sup>h</sup>.**

SOME few among them, indeed, had just apprehensions concerning the natural consequences of these things, and were deeply affected with the expectation of those judgments, with which they were threaten'd by the prophets, and which at this time hung over their country. But the generality of those that even receiv'd some impressions of these things, *put far away the evil day, and caus'd the seat of vio-*

<sup>f</sup> Hof. xii. 1.

<sup>h</sup> Amos v. 21----24.

<sup>g</sup> Isaiah iii. 8, 9.

of the great storm in 1703. 15

lence to come near; they lay upon their beds of ivory, and stretch'd themselves on their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; they chaunted to the sound of the viol, and invented to themselves instruments of musick, like David; they drank wine in bowls, and anointed themselves with the chief ointments: but they were not grieved for the afflictions of Joseph<sup>i</sup>. To sum up this sad account of the iniquities of *Israel*, in the words of the prophet *Amos*, so great, so numerous, and so aggravated were their transgressions, that the Lord was press'd under them, as a cart is press'd that is full of sheaves<sup>k</sup>.

IN these circumstances was this unhappy nation, when the Lord was pleas'd to send them the dreadful message contain'd in our text. I shall proceed therefore,

III. To open the admonition itself.

AND it is address'd to them, you see, in the most pathetick manner: *Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel*. The note of attention us'd on this occasion was designed, no doubt, to awaken in their minds the strictest regard to a message of so much importance; to give a sharper point to the rebuke it contain'd; and, perhaps, to express the compassion with which the prophet was affected, not to say the bowels of God himself, at the foresight of that impending ruin, which wou'd be the certain consequence

<sup>i</sup> Amos vi. 3---6.

<sup>k</sup> Chap. ii. 13.

16 *A SERMON in commemoration*

of the dreadful interview to which they were  
summon'd.

As to the summons itself.

FIRST, it is understood by some, in an ironi-  
cal way, as a contemptuous defiance of these  
wicked, vain, and stubborn people, in the ful-  
ness of all their prosperity in sin, to get them-  
selves ready for a dispute with the Almighty.  
God, it seems, was coming forth in his wrath ;  
and he invites *Israel*, who had so often abus'd  
his mercy, and despis'd his judgments, to col-  
lect all their strength, to come and meet him,  
and try the issue. And if we take the words  
in this sense, what dreadful ideas do they fur-  
nish us with? For,

(1.) THEY were to consider his character  
whom they were challeng'd to meet, and with  
whom they were to have this conflict. And  
who was it? but,

1. GOD himself, the great creator of all  
things, and the upholder of every being. A  
God of such infinite and tremendous majesty  
and power, that *the nations are before him as  
the drop of a bucket, and are counted as the  
small dust of the balance*<sup>1</sup>: To whose power,  
when that of all the kingdoms of the earth is  
oppos'd, it is *nothing, yea less than nothing, and  
vanity*<sup>m</sup>. A God, *whose eyes are as a flame of  
fire, and who searches the heart and reins*<sup>n</sup>;  
who can in an instant of time, if he pleases,

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah xl. 15.

<sup>n</sup> Rev. ii. 18.

<sup>m</sup> Ver. 17.



command all nature to be subservient to the designs of his wrath, or, with one breath of his own mouth, blast the deepest schemes of policy that men and devils can contrive, and overthrow all the forces they can bring together. They were challenged to meet that God, who had driven an host of rebellious angels out of heaven, had cast them into an infernal prison, and there bound them in chains against the day of his judgment; who had drowned a world in the flood of his vengeance, and had pour'd down fire and desolation from heaven on the cities of the plain. They knew, their fathers had told them, and the sacred scriptures had recorded, the folly of contending with heaven. And as by many a dread-example among their enemies in *Egypt* and in *Canaan*, and by many an instance among themselves also, they had found the advantage of having God on their side, so they had been terribly taught the danger of meeting him as an enemy. If indeed they had been challeng'd to meet the *Syrian*, or the *Philistine*, their enemies of *Edam*, or of *Moab*, either separate, or with their forces united together; or if they had been call'd to defend themselves against the inroads of their brethren of *Judah* and *Benjamin*; having God on their side, they might have hoped for success, tho' their strength and numbers were never so unequal: nay, tho' infernal legions were to have encamped against them, in that case they had little to fear. But their great and powerful

18 *A SERMON in commemoration*

friend is now become their enemy, and they are not to enter into a conflict with men like themselves, or created spirits only, but with the great *Jehovah*; a God of perfect justice and holiness, and strictly jealous of the glory of his own name; a God whom they had affronted with a great variety of most aggravated offences. His indignation was justly stirred up; and if *the wrath of a king be as the roaring of a lion*<sup>o</sup>, what must his indignation be, who is *a consuming fire*<sup>p</sup>? *who kills, and who makes alive; neither is there any who can deliver out of his hand*<sup>q</sup>. If he whets his glittering sword, and his hand takes hold on judgment, he will render vengeance to his enemies, and will reward them that hate him<sup>r</sup>. With what majestic terror doth the prophet *Nahum* describe the divine anger: *God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked. The Lord bath his way in the whirlwind, and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers. Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth. The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burnt at his presence;*

<sup>o</sup> Prov. xix. 12.

Isa. xliii. 13.

<sup>p</sup> Deut. iv. 24.

<sup>r</sup> Deut. xxxii. 41.

<sup>q</sup> 1 Sam. ii. 6.

yea, the world and all that dwell therein, who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? But then,

2. THE terror of the summons will be still more aggravated, when we consider that they are required to meet this tremendous Being, as *their God. Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.*

THE nearer the relation is, in which we stand, to any of our fellow-creatures, the more is their approbation to be regarded, according to the laws of nature, and the more are their resentments to be feared. The anger of an abus'd friend is often more terrible than that of a profess'd enemy; the wrath of a brother is *as the bars of a castle*<sup>u</sup>; and that of an indulgent parent, when thoroughly provok'd, is more to be fear'd than either. Subjects, that without provocation, have taken up arms against a good king and their rightful sovereign, who has always made justice and mercy the measures of his government, have more to fear from his righteous resentments, than from the rage of any *foreign* prince whom they have oppos'd. It was a dangerous thing for any nation to meet God in his wrath, who raiseth up all the kings of the earth, and casteth them down, and disposeth of all nations at his pleasure. But then it must be much more so to *Israel*, because they had been the people of his peculiar choice; he had not only given them a rich plenty of the common blessings of life, but he had favour'd them with his special

Nah. i. 2---6.

<sup>u</sup> Prov. xviii. 19.



presence, had bless'd them with the oracles of salvation, had sent his prophets among them, and had given them of his Holy Spirit. He had been *a wall of fire round about them, and a glory in the midst of them.*<sup>w</sup> He had been *the shield of their help, and the sword of their excellency, and had made them tread upon the high places of their enemies*<sup>x</sup>. God had taken on him the endearing character of their father; he had chosen *Israel for his portion, and Jacob for the lot of his inheritance*<sup>y</sup>. Surely, these considerations greatly heightened their danger, and when all these endearing characters are revers'd; the gracious prince, the father, and the friend; how dreadful must the meeting be? Nay, God is pleas'd, by his prophets, to make use of the conjugal relation, to represent his love and goodness to them, and *their maker* condescends to call himself *their husband*<sup>z</sup>. And if *jealousy be the rage of a man*<sup>a</sup>, how dreadful must that of the Lord of Hosts be? But this brings me

(2.) To consider the interview itself, to which *Israel* is challeng'd, as it is express'd in the text; namely, to *meet their God* in his terrible wrath.

THEY had forsaken the Lord, and turn'd their backs upon their God; but now they must meet him. After former miscarriages, when there was hope concerning them, they were

<sup>w</sup> Zech. ii. 5.

<sup>z</sup> Isaiah liv. 5.

<sup>x</sup> Deut. xxxiii. 29.

<sup>a</sup> Prov. vi. 34.

<sup>y</sup> Chap. xxxii. 9.

admonish'd

admonish'd by the prophets to seek him, while he might be found, and to call upon him while he was near<sup>b</sup>. When the Lord had withdrawn himself from them, on account of their sins, they were advis'd to follow hard after him, and give him no rest till he turn'd again<sup>c</sup> to shew them mercy: and they had often found, by happy experience, that when they attended to this advice, and in an humble way drew nigh unto God, he had always manifested a gracious readiness to meet them with forgiveness and blessing. But, alas! now he comes travelling in the greatness of his strength<sup>d</sup>, to meet and dispute the point with Israel. They cannot fly, neither be hid from his presence, nor any way escape the conflict. And indeed the prophet seems to intimate, that such was their impudence in sin, that they had boldness enough to venture on the dispute. They were ready to say, let him make speed and hasten his work, that we may see it; and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it<sup>e</sup>.

WELL --- the interview draws on. God is coming forward in the terrors of his majesty, and Israel must meet him. He had often sent his servants, the prophets, with such fearful messages as had made the stoutest hearts among them tremble. He had often disputed with them at second hand, and he had always been

<sup>b</sup> Isaiah lv. 6.

<sup>c</sup> Chap. lxii. 7.

Mich. vii. 19.

<sup>d</sup> Isaiah lxiii. 1.

<sup>e</sup> Chap. v. 19.

## 22 *A SERMON in commemoration*

too hard for them. When God had pleaded with *Israel* by pestilence, they had been swept away ; when, by his direction, the sword of their enemies was unsheathed, they were always overcome ; when the elements were appointed to maintain the quarrel of heaven, the fire had rag'd with success, and the water had *overflowed the biding-place*: God had made the earth to tremble under their feet, and the air, which was otherwise wont to befriend their happy climate with its gentle breezes, when awaken'd by his wrath, had been rais'd into a tumultuous commotion, and the tempest, by a commission from him, had laid their habitations in ruins. He had caus'd destruction to fall down upon them with the dew of heaven, and arm'd a worm with power enough to rob a nation of their food, and spread a famine through the whole land. But their case was now much worse ; for these judgments, how great soever, had been always hitherto attended with some mitigation, and had been so check'd, as not to prove their total ruin. But now God would no longer dispute with them at a distance, and with the lesser displays of his power, but he was determin'd to come forth against them himself, and contend with them to their utter destruction. Which brings me,

(3.) To consider the direction given to *Israel*, on this occasion, to *prepare*, to make ready for the interview.

AND indeed, in the sense in which I am considering the words, this carries in it something



thing peculiarly threatening. They are forewarn'd, that there might be no just pretence of surprize in the case; they are admonish'd to settle all their measures, and make ready for the attack; and when the great decisive day comes on, they are challeng'd to exert all their strength and skill in the contest. And after all, when power and policy prove unsuccessful, and they are overthrown in fight, and taken captive in their rebellion, as they most certainly would; for '*what is man, that is a worm*, that he should contend with his maker; they are then advis'd to get every argument ready, that they are capable of producing, why justice should not take place with the utmost severity.

To sum up the words, in this sense, it is as if the prophet had said: " O miserable  
" nation, the descendants indeed of great pro-  
" genitors, the peculiar favourites of heaven;  
" but the degenerate offspring of such pa-  
" rents, and the ungrateful objects of such  
" care! Your sins have gone over your heads  
" as a thick cloud, they have cried aloud for  
" vengeance, and the measure of them is just  
" full: you have sinned against mercy and  
" affliction, against all sorts of counsels and  
" warnings, against repeated vows, and many  
" salvations. Know now, unhappy *Israel*,  
" that the Lord of Hosts, that God, who is  
" infinite in justice, as well as goodness, and  
" who doth all things like himself, has de-

† Job. xxv. 6.

— terminated

24 *A SERMON in commemoration*

“ terminated to visit your iniquities with the  
 “ most fearful marks of his righteous dis-  
 “ pleasure. He, whose messengers have been  
 “ affronted, whose lesser judgments have been  
 “ despised, is coming forth himself out of his  
 “ place to contend with you in his terrible  
 “ power. Remember, *Israel*, that God is  
 “ coming, against whom no weapon, in the  
 “ end, ever prosper’d; who, by the breath of  
 “ his mouth has destroy’d many nations, which  
 “ have risen up against him, among the chil-  
 “ dren of men; and has driven hosts of  
 “ angels out of heaven into immediate per-  
 “ dition, as the reward of their rebellion.  
 “ This great God, once your God, your gra-  
 “ cious benefactor, your tender father, and your  
 “ friend, but now your enrag’d enemy, is  
 “ coming forth against you. The interview  
 “ is fix’d, and cannot be avoided; therefore  
 “ get yourselves ready, prepare to meet him,  
 “ make yourselves strong for the fight, gird on  
 “ your armour, put your troops in battle array,  
 “ call in the aid of all your auxiliaries; and,  
 “ re-inforc’d by sin and hell, take your wea-  
 “ pons in your hands, join the battle, and then  
 “ shall heaven and earth be witnesses of the  
 “ effects of your folly, and the fatal event of so  
 “ unequal a contest.”

BUT, as the words will bear another sense,  
 we must consider them in that light also.  
 For,

SECONDLY, Some understand the text as  
 a kind warning to this sinful people, to make  
 ready

ready to meet the Lord in such a temper and spirit, as was most suitable to their circumstances, and might happily be attended with pardon and acceptance.

THUS *Israel*, as a nation, is admonished to behave in such a manner, as might be a means to prevent the national judgment that was impending. And those among them, who could claim a peculiar interest in God by faith, as their God, are especially exhorted so to conduct themselves, that when the visitation came, they might be spar'd, and pluck'd as brands out of the fire; or, however, be graciously supported under the general calamity, and comforted with the believing view of their assured interest in eternal salvation. Taking the words in this sense, it will not be improper for me to shew you, in some particulars, how a people, in such circumstances, should provide against so dismal a day. And,

1. To be sure it would be of great importance for them to be suitably affected with their danger. If the minds of men were, on such occasions, impress'd with a proper sense of the dignity and perfections of the divine nature, of their relation to God, and their obligations to an entire subjection and conformity to his will, these sentiments would be naturally attended with awful apprehensions of a contest with him. But then, if they did but reflect, that they had affronted him in so many different ways, and with such aggravated offences, as it appears *Israel* had, how must the terror increase? They would then tremble

E

indeed



26 *A SERMON in commemoration*

indeed at the approach of that God, who not only observes publick transgressions, but is witness to the most hidden iniquity of the heart: who is arm'd with power enough to inflict a punishment equal to the guilt of the greatest offender, and can as easily pour out judgments on whole nations, as on private persons: whose patience and mercy indeed waits long on sinful men, but whose wrath gathers strength by delay; and who has in all generations, sooner or later, shewn a fiery indignation against national wickedness and impenitency. If men did but, in such a case, review the many instances of a sudden reckoning, to which communities as well as private persons have been call'd, and reflect, with what surprize destruction came upon them, and how unsuccessful all their attempts were to prevent it; these considerations would increase their fears. Again,

2. IT would be happy for people, in such circumstances, if their sense of danger were attended with a deep and speedy humiliation for sin, as the true cause of it. The dictates of right reason, as well as scripture, discover the propriety of such a behaviour. For, besides the odious nature of sin itself, and its exceeding offensiveness to God, when it is consider'd as the sad cause of their danger, the principle of self-preservation should put men upon the most speedy acknowledgment of that with which their hearts are so much affected. And thus they shou'd be deeply humbled before the Lord for the detestable

ble thing which he hates, and which they find is like to bring the greatest mischiefs on themselves, their country, and their posterity. A bare formal humiliation in this case will not satisfy their own minds, much less will it be acceptable to the Lord. No, they will be convinced, that it is necessary to *rend their hearts* as well as *their garments*<sup>h</sup>, or else all their acknowledgments will be vain, and of no effect. And then,

3. THEIR repentance must be attended with a sincere and universal reformation. Without this, all pretences to sorrow for sin will be of no use, but to aggravate the guilt of it. And it would be monstrously absurd, for any man to expect to meet the Lord with any degree of comfort, while he indulges that in his own practice, or rolls it as a sweet morsel under his tongue, which has given the offence. Nor must their attempts of reformation be personal only; but what is begun by men in their own hearts and lives, must be diligently pursued in their families, among their neighbours, and as far as their influence reaches. And,

4. THEY will then find it to be their duty, to pour out their sense of sin and danger in the most fervent cries to the throne of grace. They should give God no rest day nor night, but plead with him incessantly for national as well as personal pardon, and that the vengeance he has so justly threaten'd, may be averted.

<sup>h</sup> Joel ii. 13.

Fervent, humble, united, and constant prayer has, in this case (if I may so express it) a kind of omnipotency with heaven itself<sup>i</sup>. But then,

5. THIS must be all done in faith, for that only can afford the pleasing prospect of a favourable answer. If men can come to God, believing in his power, his wisdom, and his goodness; if they can come to him as to their God, and plead their interest in that covenant, which is order'd in all things and sure; if they can, upon good grounds, make mention of the righteousness of the great mediator, as their righteousness, and plead their interest in his satisfaction; if they can put their prayers into his hands; if they can find him engaged in the plea, and interesting himself in their behalf, they are safe: then may they be justly said, and not till then, to be *prepar'd to meet the God of Israel*. God hath been us'd to regard publick and national humiliations, and they have often prevented publick calamities. But it is only evangelical repentance, which is always attended with faith, that is truly pleasing to God. And the prayers of such men prevail much with him for others, as well as themselves. Thus you see the words may be understood, as a gracious and tender admonition to *Israel*, to take such measures as might avert the storm.

AND what if we should unite both these senses together, and conclude, that the text

<sup>i</sup> James v. 16.



contains a faithful warning to persons of all  
forts, as well the righteous, as the wicked.  
Then, it is as if the prophet had said,  
“ God is coming forth to contend with this  
“ whole land, and that, in a very dreadful  
“ manner ; therefore let all the inhabitants of  
“ it prepare for the conflict. O *Israel*, how  
“ greatly have you sin’d ? how general has the  
“ defection been ? You have not only revolt-  
“ ed in a national way from your allegiance  
“ to the King of kings, the God of your sal-  
“ vation, your great and constant benefactor ;  
“ but as a people favour’d with the revelation  
“ of the divine will, professing the true  
“ religion, and under all sorts of engage-  
“ ments to obedience and holiness ; you have  
“ sin’d and departed from God your saviour,  
“ and your hope. And even those among you,  
“ who yet retain serious sentiments of divine  
“ things, have greatly lost their stedfastness ;  
“ their faith is weaken’d, their purity is defil’d,  
“ their love to God, and zeal for his honour, is  
“ greatly abated. O *Israel* ! you have all  
“ sin’d, and provok’d the eyes of his jealousy,  
“ with whom you have to do. He is coming  
“ forward in his great wrath : *Return there-*  
“ *fore, return, O backsliding Israel*<sup>k</sup> ! May na-  
“ tional mourning and an universal refor-  
“ mation prevent the righteous vengeance that  
“ approaches. Act up to the character of  
“ those who profess the only true religion in  
“ the world. Let the house of God be purg’d  
“ from all false worship, and let the sighs and

<sup>k</sup> Jer. iii, 12.

### 30 A SERMON in commemoration

“ groans of sincere repentance arise from thence,  
 “ as well as the smoke of incense. Offer up to  
 “ God the sacrifice of bleeding hearts and con-  
 “ trite spirits, which are infinitely more accep-  
 “ table in his sight, than thousands of other  
 “ victims. Let your princes, nobles, and great  
 “ men *walk softly before God*<sup>1</sup>, and *the priests,*  
 “ *the ministers of the Lord, weep between the*  
 “ *porch and the altar*<sup>m</sup>. Let all sorts of men  
 “ repent and reform, and who knows but God  
 “ may repent him of the wrath he has de-  
 “ nounc’d against you, and may return again  
 “ and bless you. But if this be not the happy  
 “ effect of a kind and gracious warning, then  
 “ let a wicked and impenitent nation prepare,  
 “ let them get all their strength and wisdom  
 “ ready against the day of wrath, and let them  
 “ remember, that they have had such solemn  
 “ notice of the approach of their vindictive  
 “ enemy. However, let the truly godly  
 “ amongst you shew themselves to be *Israelites*  
 “ *indeed*, by their sincere and humble acknow-  
 “ ledgments of the common provocations;  
 “ let it appear also by a thorough reformation  
 “ as far as their influence reaches. O! shew  
 “ yourselves the genuine offspring of your  
 “ father *Jacob*; and like him, from whom you  
 “ derive your name, *wrestle with God* for your-  
 “ selves, your families, and your country; and  
 “ who can tell, but that like him you may *pre-*  
 “ *vail*<sup>n</sup>. Be encourag’d by those promises that

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings xxi. 27.

<sup>n</sup> Gen. xxxii. 28.

<sup>m</sup> Joel ii. 17.

“ stand

*of the great storm in 1703.* 31

“ stand in the records of eternal truth. Remem-  
“ ber God is the God of *Jacob*; he has shewn  
“ himself to be your father’s God, and to be  
“ yours too, and he will for ever stand fast to his  
“ covenant. Tho’ for your sins he *hide himself*  
“ *from you for a moment*, yet when you are  
“ humbled, he *will return*; and *tho’ he chastise*  
“ *your iniquities with stripes*, yet *his loving-*  
“ *kindness he will not take away* from you.”  
“ Plead your interest in the man of his right-  
“ hand; if that is secure, then all will be well.  
“ And tho’ you should not be so happy, as to  
“ succeed in your attempts to reform those  
“ about you, nor in your intercession for a  
“ guilty nation; yet, when the general cala-  
“ mity comes, you shall either be hidden till it  
“ be overpast, or supported under the weight  
“ of it. Tho’ a sweeping desolation shou’d  
“ overflow the whole land, tho’ the earth  
“ itself shou’d reel under the pressure of the  
“ wrath of God; in the midst of the storm  
“ of his vengeance, and even in a wreck of  
“ worlds, your Redeemer shall bear you up,  
“ and your eternal welfare shall be secur’d.”  
BUT it is time now that I proceed,

IV. To make some improvement of these things, by applying them to our own circumstances, and the anniversary occasion of this day.

AND, surely, a due consideration of the awful message to *Israel* in the text, cannot be dis-

• Isa. liv. 7.

Psal. lxxxix. 33.

agreeable



### 32 *A SERMON in commemoration*

agreeable to a design intended to revive in our memories, and that in the most serious manner, a tremendous dispensation of providence, which happen'd among us four and thirty years ago; when these parts of the world were visited with a violent storm of wind, which, perhaps, arose to an higher pitch, was longer in its duration, and wider in its extent, than any tempest that has happen'd in these latter ages of the world. Such was the devastation of that dreadful night, that, in a few hours, our houses and publick buildings were stript of their coverings, and many of them laid in ruins; trees without number were torn up by the roots, and the pride of our groves and forests levelled with the ground. Our ships were dash'd to pieces in their harbours, and the shores of our island cover'd with the spoils of the tempest. Many were bruis'd and wounded, and some lost their lives by the fall of their habitations, and were buried in the ruins of them: and many more were hurried into eternity in all the distraction that must attend such a tempest at sea. Nor is it possible for me to describe the terror that seiz'd on all sorts of people; their hearts, for some hours, failing them, while they were under the fearful apprehensions of perishing in a common destruction. Conscience, God's faithful witness, shook many a stout sinner then; and the sons of infidelity, who had been us'd, at other times, to insult God himself, and deride all religious fear, as the product only of weak minds, found but little disposition to pursue their profane

profane jests during the horrors of that night, and were made sensible that natural bravery, together with all the advantages of philosophy, were but poor supports under the terrible apprehensions of the approach of an angry God: while some, who have been often the subjects of the mirth of these men, and are now living, can remember, how everlasting arms supported their fainting souls; how faith lean'd on the promises of the Gospel, and was refresh'd; and how Christ was *the strength of the needy in their distress, and a secure refuge from the storm*<sup>p</sup>.

WHAT hath been often observ'd of other extraordinary providences, was very remarkable in this, that as the violent agitation of the air encreas'd to such a degree, as to leave incontestible evidences behind it of the displeasure of that great Being, *who makes darkness his pavilion, and who rides upon the wings of the wind*<sup>q</sup>; so if it had been suffered but a little to exceed the bounds to which it rose, it must have spread desolation through the whole land. But he that *holds the winds in his fist*<sup>r</sup>, and to whom all the elements are *obedient*<sup>t</sup>, gives out even judgments themselves in *weight and measure*<sup>t</sup>. And, one is led rather to wonder at the seasonable check the Lord gave to this unruly element, at such a crisis, and at a preservation which no human power

<sup>p</sup> Isa. xxv. 4.

<sup>q</sup> Mat. viii. 27.

<sup>r</sup> Ps. xviii. 10, 11.

<sup>t</sup> Job xxviii. 25.

<sup>r</sup> Prov. xxx. 4.

34 *A SERMON in commemoration*

could afford, than at the damages which were sustained by it.

GOD has been pleas'd to discover the marks of his displeasure towards mankind, in many and various ways; and has often shewn, that he can make the weakest, and the most contemptible creatures the swift, and faithful executioners of his indignation. But I think it is worthy of observation, that some of the most remarkable displays of divine wrath have been in the immediate use of one or more of the elements of nature. When the sins of the inhabitants of the old world had fully ripen'd them for destruction, *the fountains of the great deep were broken up, the windows of heaven were opened*<sup>v</sup>, and a commission was given to the mighty waters to swallow them all up, except *Noah* and his family. When *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, and the rest of the cities of the plain, had fill'd up their measure of iniquity, and at last, by the most unnatural wickedness, provok'd the divine vengeance to an execution; the materials, which are represented in Scripture as the everlasting supply of infernal burnings, were kindled by the breath of the Lord, *and fire and brimstone were rain'd out of heaven* upon them, to their utter destruction<sup>w</sup>. And so when God would shew a special indignation against the daring insolence of *Korah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram*, and the rest concerned in that rebellion; the ground clave asunder at his command, *the earth opened her mouth, and*

<sup>v</sup> Gen. vii. 11.

<sup>w</sup> Chap. xix. 24.

*they*



they, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit<sup>x</sup>.

WIND is one of the most hidden works of divine wisdom and power, and its causes have more puzzled philosophy, than most other phænomena in nature. It bloweth where it listeth, and we hear the sound thereof; but none can tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth<sup>y</sup>. As it gives strength and fury to desolating flames, so the tumultuous raging of the sea is owing to its influence. Thus some have observed, that wind is peculiarly adapted to express the immediate power of the great governor of the world, in extraordinary cases. When God was willing to shew the greatness of wrath, and display the glory of his power on the Egyptians, who, as vessels of wrath, were fitted to destruction<sup>z</sup>, the wind, which had before divided the waters for the passage of the Israelites, blew down those liquid walls on Pharaoh and all his host, and buried them in the midst of the sea<sup>a</sup>. And, as David magnificently expresses it, *then the earth shook and trembled, and the foundations of heaven moved, and shook, because he was wroth; there went smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured, coals were kindled by it; he bowed the heavens also, and came down, and darkness was under his feet; and he rode upon a cherub, and did fly, and he was seen upon the wings of the wind*<sup>b</sup>. And, our prophet, when he calls

<sup>x</sup> Numb. xvi. 33.

<sup>a</sup> Exod. xiv. 28.

<sup>y</sup> John iii. 8.

<sup>b</sup> 2 Sam. xxii. 8---11.

<sup>z</sup> Rom. ix. 17, 22.

36 *A SERMON in commemoration*

upon *Israel*, in the text, to meet their God, that he might strike their minds with a proper apprehension of the *danger* of meeting him as an enemy; he immediately adds, *Lo, he formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth to man what is his thought; he maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth; the Lord, the God of hosts is his name<sup>c</sup>*. And when the complete ruin of a sinful world is to take place, these several elements are represented as the artillery of the divine indignation. Then will the Lord rain upon the wicked, snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup<sup>d</sup>. Our God shall then come, and shall not keep silence, a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him<sup>e</sup>. The sun shall become black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon shall become as blood; the stars of heaven shall fall to the earth, even as untimely figs when the tree is shaken by a mighty wind<sup>f</sup>. Then the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up<sup>g</sup>. And if such be the way of the Lord, then surely, every warning which he is pleased to give of this kind, should be seriously considered by the sons of men. The earthquake, that happened in the time of *Amos*, was an awful notice of the divine anger, and

<sup>c</sup> Amos iv. 13.

<sup>f</sup> Rev. vi. 12. 13.

<sup>d</sup> Psal. xi. 6.

<sup>g</sup> 2 Pet. iii. 10.

<sup>e</sup> Psal. l. 3.

a terrible presage of the ruin of the ten tribes of *Israel*, which followed soon after. If God has been admonishing our nation, as well as theirs, by pestilence, and by fire, in former times, and more lately by a tempest, earthquake, and other unusual appearances in nature, methinks it should be reasonable to consider the prophet's warning, as far as it suits our condition. I know it is a most unfashionable thing, at this time of day, to indulge any fear of this kind; and any one, who shall offer to look higher than a second cause for such dispensations, will hardly escape the character of an enthusiast, among the modern sons of *wisdom*, and *with whom* it seems it is to die<sup>b</sup>. But notwithstanding this, it will be well for those who profess to have taken the Scripture for their rule, to consider, that as God has been us'd to give such notices of his anger, so he has always greatly resented the neglect of them. And right reason will surely teach us thus much, that it is natural for the same causes to produce the same effects; and if there be a likeness in our situation to that of *Israel*, at the time when the summons in the text was sent to them, then all the rebuke and counsel contain'd in it may be usefully accommodated to our case.

AND let it then be consider'd,

I. THAT no nation under the sun can boast of the favours we have received from heaven. The plenty of the common blessings of life, which we have long enjoy'd,

<sup>b</sup> Job xii. 2.

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38 *A SERMON in commemoration*

can hardly be equall'd by any of our neighbours: in our civil liberties we have exceed'd them all; and these have been rescued so often, and preserv'd to us by such a series of wonders, as has made us the objects of their envy and astonishment. But what are all these good things, when compar'd with the spiritual privileges, which have been pour'd out, in so rich and free a manner, upon us? We have had the gospel of peace and salvation long planted among us: the sun of righteousness has for many years shone with uncommon brightness, and most diffusive rays, on our happy land. Through the many strong cries and tears of our fore-fathers, that faith and worship, which is contain'd in the holy scriptures, and which they, many of them, seal'd with their blood, has been conveyed down to us in its native purity and power. We have been often indeed obliged to struggle for our religion and our liberties; but it is remarkable, that as it was with *Israel*, at the time when *Amos* prophesied, so we have enjoyed, now for a considerable term of years, such public tranquillity, such a freedom from foreign enemies and domestic confusions, and this in such a full possession of spiritual and temporal blessings, as surely no part of our history can, for so long a season, parallel.

2. BUT, alas! how we have improv'd, or rather abus'd, these great advantages, I dread to relate! If, upon a fair examination, it shall appear, that we have acted over the same part  
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that *Israel* did, and if, in many instances, we have exceeded the iniquities of that ungrateful and unhappy nation, what may be expected, but that crimes so much alike should be follow'd by a punishment equally severe; and that, without speedy repentance and reformation, God should come forth in great indignation against us?

IF *Israel* provok'd God greatly by the defection of their principles, by the corruption of their faith and their worship, surely we are not at all behind them in these respects. *They indeed forsook the fountain of living waters, and hew'd out to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that would hold no water*<sup>i</sup>; and after having been reformed from the idolatry of former times, they set up the calves of *Dan* and *Bethel*, and mixed these abominations with the worship of the living and true God. And have not many among us, after a glorious deliverance from the idolatry and superstition of *Rome*, forsaken the doctrine of the sacred Trinity in Unity, and most industriously labour'd to destroy that equal homage which the Scriptures ascribe to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as the one only living and true God, and to introduce into our religion a subordinate worship, even that of a mere creature. *Israel* of old were often justly reproach'd for their ill treatment of those eminent persons that God rais'd up among them for their deliverance; but these men have not feared to put the greatest af-

<sup>i</sup> Jer. ii. 13.

40 *A SERMON in commemoration*

front on the author of eternal salvation; and have endeavoured to dethrone the Son of God himself: and the principal argument on which this daring attempt has been founded, is the deep humiliation to which he submitted for the salvation of sinners. *Israel forgot the rock from whence they were hewn, and the hole of the pit from whence they were digged<sup>k</sup>*; but many among us, in direct contradiction to experience, as well as revelation, have learn'd to deny not only the original guilt, but the depravity of human nature. The ten tribes forsook the temple worship, the priesthood, the altars, and the sacrifices of God's appointment, which were only figures of that blood and righteousness by which we are redeemed and justified. But, alas! how have men, in our times, renounced that righteousness itself, and set up in exchange for it a poor moral one of their own? How many have denied the proper priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the only true sacrifice and atonement for sin, call'd in question the intercession of the great Mediator, and represented the Saviour of the world as little more than a martyr for virtue? Did *Jerboam* and his followers cast contempt on the urim and the thummim, on the precious oil, and the sacred fire of the temple? yes, they did. But many among us, under the clearer light of the Gospel, have not only despis'd the operations and influences of the Holy Spirit, but denied even his personality and existence. They indeed slighted the

<sup>k</sup> Isa. lvii. 1.



ceremonial laver, but these men have denied, and too many of them have ridicul'd the work of regeneration itself. The holy rites of that dispensation were indeed render'd contemptible, and greatly prophaned, by the priests as well as the people; but we daily behold a greater solemnity than ever they could boast of, prostituted to secular and base purposes; and then, perhaps, to reconcile mens consciences to the abuse, 'tis represented as a common thing. In a word, what shall we think of those men, who, under all our present advantages, have shewn so great a readiness to cast off all regard to divine revelation, and to set up the fallacious dictates of fallen and unrenewed reason on the ruins of the word of God. Thus, *light is come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light*<sup>k</sup>. But if *those who despised the law of Moses, died without mercy under two or three witnesses, of how much sorer punishment shall they be thought worthy, who have trodden under foot the son of God, and have counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and have done despite to the Spirit of grace*<sup>l</sup>?

BUT this is not all: for corruption in principle has been attended with most scandalous immorality in practice. The abounding of vice and profaneness has been often the grief and complaint of good men: but I fear, when we compare our own with former times, we shall be obliged to acknowledge, that the

<sup>k</sup> John iii. 19.

<sup>l</sup> Heb. x. 28, 29.

42 *A SERMON in commemoration*

inhabitants of this land have, in these respects, in this last age, exceeded all that have gone before them. Such is the pride and luxury of the nation in general, and their proneness to all sorts of sensual gratifications, that many wise men have dreaded the consequences, upon a political account; justly fearing that the spirit of the people being dissolv'd, and their strength enervated, we should sink into a state of poverty, contempt, and cowardice; and so become an easy prey to our enemies. These are the natural effects of such a behaviour, and they furnish us with just grounds of fear; but, we have surely much more reason to be afraid of the divine anger. *Israel*, indeed, us'd to wish their new moons to be over, and long'd for the sabbath to be at an end, that they might buy and sell, and get gain. But multitudes, who call themselves christians, are so far from having a serious regard to any season of this kind, that all the use they make of opportunities set apart for religion, is to devote them, as times of leisure, to the most profligate purposes. Fraud and violence, falsehood and corruption, have spread through all ranks and degrees of men among us. The frequent and numerous executions of justice may convince us, how wickedness increases among the meaner sort; and the self-murders we so often hear of, are sad evidences of the dreadful depravity that prevails. As wilful perjury was, perhaps, never so common as now; so the new-invented imprecations and blasphemies with which our

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ears are continually tormented, greatly threaten the land with the vengeance of that God, who is so often call'd upon by multitudes to pour out damnation on themselves, as well as others, in every form. Drunkenness is come to such a pitch, that our legislature has found itself under a necessity to provide against it, by such a law, as was never thought needful, perhaps, in the world before; and this, lest the strength on which our trade and our defence so much, under God, depends, should be utterly destroyed. And we daily see with what difficulties this law takes place, and how many outrages, and even murders are committed in opposing its execution. Unclean-ness of every sort is too openly and impudently committed, and even the lawfulness of it by too many defended, to admit of any doubt of its increase.

BUT I must only just mention these sad symptoms, and add, that, what renders our case still more threatening, is, that among men of soberer characters, many are daily apostatizing from the truth, and breaking through the influences of a religious education; and many others, who profess to retain a serious regard to the God of their fathers, yet have only a *name to live*<sup>m</sup>, and rest in the outward *form of godli-ness, without the power of it*<sup>n</sup>; while some of those, who have profess'd a warm concern for the doctrines of the Gospel, have *turn'd the grace of it into wantonness*<sup>o</sup>. And even the

<sup>m</sup> Rev. iii. 1.

<sup>o</sup> Jude Ver. 4.

<sup>n</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 5.



#### 44 *A SERMON in commemoration*

few that are left in the land, who truly fear God, who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and love him in sincerity, and who have felt the saving influences of the Divine Spirit, how is their faith weaken'd, and their love abated? How is *the glory departed, and the crown fallen from our heads*? The spirit of our forefathers is gone, and we *have left our first love*<sup>1</sup>. What is become of the life and faithfulness of our former teachers, and how few of our watchmen are able to answer him, who enquires, *what of the night*? Where is the spirit of prayer fled? the pure discipline, under which our churches once flourished? the religion which was then found in families, and the holiness that was written on the conversation of christians, their close walk with God, and affectionate regard to one another? Surely, under our present circumstances, and considering the sad examples we have had before our eyes of the effects of the divine resentment on other sinful nations, and the various warnings we ourselves have had by storms, by earthquakes, and by many unusual appearances in the heavens; and considering the rumours of wars, with which, after so long a series of peace, we have been so frequently alarm'd, we should tremble at the expectation of those dreadful judgments, which the great governour of the world, remarkably tender of these kingdoms, seems to be bringing forward with reluctance,

<sup>1</sup> Lam. v. 16,

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xxi. 11,

<sup>1</sup> Rev. ii. 4.

and

*of the great storm in 1703.* 45

and unwilling, if possible, to pour out upon us. What remains then to be done, but that according to the prophet in my text, thou should'st **PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD, O BRITAIN.**

LET the resolute contemners of the Gospel of Christ, and all the grace of it, make themselves ready; let them gird on their harness, let them take to themselves arguments, and bring forth all, that unrenew'd reason has to say against this Gospel, and see whether they shall be able to overthrow Christ himself, when he comes to plead with them, who could never yet be too hard for his faithful, tho' despis'd, followers. Let the profane *blaspheme God, and look up*<sup>f</sup>; let the oppressor entrench himself in his ill-gotten wealth; let the libertine stupify his fears in his drunken bowls, and dissolve himself in lewdness and sensuality. But let them all know, that they must soon meet the *living, just, and jealous God, into whose hands it is a fearful thing to fall*<sup>t</sup>. Let none deceive themselves with the safety of their condition, from the calm that appears on outward things; for it is the way of the Lord to come when he is least expected, and to bring sudden destruction with him. Thus it was that he surprized the old world<sup>u</sup>, and thus he treated the nation of the *Jews*, at their final ruin and dispersion,

<sup>f</sup> Isa. viii. 21,

<sup>t</sup> Heb. x. 31.

<sup>u</sup> Mat. xxiv. 38.

46 *A SERMON in commemoration*

AND now, also, let all such who have any remains of true religion left, consider well, that much will depend on their conduct. They must be humbled and reform'd, if ever this nation truly prosper. They must pray, and mix much faith and fervency with their prayers, if ever God's judgments be averted. Surely love to themselves, surely love to their country, to their friends, to their families, and their posterity, should engage good men to unite their supplications, and their endeavours for such a thorough reformation, as only can prevent the sad effects of the divine anger.

AND I would hope, that the mournful providence the whole nation is at this time under, in the loss of a PRINCESS, who was the glory of her sex, the admiration of all the courts of *Europe*, and the nursing mother of our *British Israel*, and this in the midst of her days; I say, I hope this sad dispensation, which the sighs of a distressed but sinful nation could not prevent, will, however, awaken us to some sense of the divine displeasure, and prove a means to put us on a proper preparation to *meet God* in his own way.

O THAT such as fear the Lord did but consider the dangers to which our sins have expos'd us! That they were but a little rous'd from the slumber into which they are fallen! O that they did but feel a disposition in their souls to apply themselves to God in good earnest! That they would but once unite their hearts and hands together! That they



they would betake themselves to humiliation, to fasting; and to prayer, and that some degree of reformation were but begun among us! Who shall say, in such a case, but that the blessing might be yet obtained, and a departing God be prevail'd with to return and visit these islands with his former gracious presence? But if that should not be the happy consequence, which God of his infinite mercy grant it may; however, in such a behaviour, we may hope to meet with personal security, and find ourselves hid in the hollow of his hand, in the day of his fierce wrath. Or, if we must be partakers of the common calamities which national impenitency will, without doubt, sooner or later bring on; yet our eternal interests being secur'd, we shall, in such a frame of spirit, be prepared to pass through the darkest scene of outward trouble, with calmness and comfort.

To conclude, if to meet God in his wrath be so dreadful, as you have heard, and indeed infinitely more so than I am able to describe; how delightful will that interview be, when all the saints shall behold his face in the full displays of everlasting love? When *the marriage of the Lamb is come, and the bride has made herself ready*<sup>w</sup>? When after all the fears and temptations, to which the family of Christ have been subject during their passage through this vale of sorrow, they shall be receiv'd, by the great captain of their salvation, into a state of full deliverance? When

<sup>w</sup> Rev. xix. 7.

wash'd from every sinful defilement in their Saviour's blood, when dress'd in the spotless robe of his righteousness, and completely conform'd in body and mind to his image, they shall be crown'd with glory and immortality? To meet each other in such circumstances will afford them an unspeakable pleasure. To meet the various orders, and innumerable multitudes, of blessed angels, to be welcom'd into an intimacy of friendship with them, and to be the eternal companions of their bliss, is a happiness not to be express'd. But, oh! who can conceive the joy that will diffuse itself through every breast in that triumphant assembly, to behold the smiling face of their exalted Redeemer, and to hear his gracious lips invite them up to those thrones, which he has purchased with his blood, and of which he is now gone to take possession for them, saying, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world.\** Enter into the joy of your Lord<sup>v</sup>.

\* Mat. xxv. 34.

<sup>v</sup> Ver. 21.

F I N I S.

